

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5285

As of February 22, 2017

Title: An act relating to conducting a workforce study of employment opportunities in the agriculture, environment, and natural resources economic sectors intended to provide educators with the information needed for informing students about employment opportunities in the studied fields.

Brief Description: Conducting a workforce study of employment opportunities in the agriculture, environment, and natural resources economic sectors intended to provide educators with the information needed for informing students about employment opportunities in the studied fields.

Sponsors: Senators Wilson and Palumbo.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 1/31/17.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board to conduct a workforce assessment for the agriculture, natural resources, and environment sectors.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Staff: Clint McCarthy (786-7319)

Background: The agriculture, natural resources, and environment sectors are responsible for hundreds of thousands of jobs in Washington State. There are 37,249 farms in the state of Washington. The state's apple industry accounts for 70 percent of the country's apple production. The state's top four commodities are apples, wheat, milk and potatoes. The state's \$49 billion food and agriculture industry employs approximately 160,000 people.

Throughout the state of Washington, more than 1,700 businesses are related to forest products. The overall direct, indirect, and induced jobs impact numbers for 2013 is 105,000 workers earning \$4.9 billion in wages. The gross business income in forestry related industries is approximately \$28 billion per year.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The environmental sector includes thousands of employees that work on issues that include, but are not limited to, clean technology, storm water mitigation, and fish culvert rehabilitation.

Summary of Bill: Directs the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB) to conduct a workforce assessment for the agriculture, natural resources, and environment sectors. The study must also identify and interview a sample of major employers from the three different sectors. The study must include an assessment of:

- data from the employment security department on the current and projected levels of employment and net job vacancies;
- data used by the workforce development councils in identifying demand for workers; and
- data from the United States Census Bureau, including the longitudinal employer-household dynamics dataset.

The WTECB must convene and consult with a steering committee to define the scope of mid-level skilled occupations considered, validate designation of specific regions to be analyzed, and assist in the design of information collection. The WTECB may conduct the report directly or use a third party to conduct the study. The study must include recommendations that:

- identify improvements to the specificity, timeliness, and quality of information available on skilled workforce needs in the three sectors;
- identify steps necessary to extend this work to both entry and advanced level occupations in the three different sectors; and
- identify specific skills that are key to enabling workers to be productive in these sectors.

The results of the study are to be reported to the Legislature by October 15, 2018. This section expires June 30, 2019.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: It is important to ensure that students know what opportunities are available close to home in these three growing industries. Previous sector studies have shown that there are only a few occupations open to students and we know this is not true. We need this information so we can work effectively with K-12 educators.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Lynda Wilson, Prime Sponsor; Katherine Mahoney, State Board Community and Technical Colleges; Kathryn Kurtz, Pacific Education Institute.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.